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ABSTRACT

The document presents a program of career development groups initiated in a university setting to meet the increasing demand for vocational counseling, as well as from a general discontent with traditional one-to-one individual counseling. Structured exercises were designed to actively involve participants in occupational information--seeking behavior, while specific tasks taught student to explore the world of work through exposure to campus and community resources. Group members shared information they had gathered during the three one hour sessions when the group met. In addition, personality and interest tests were administered and discussed in relation to other factors that influence a career decision. Specific plans for evaluation were developed and initialed after the program was developed to its present format; thus data available for analysis are limited. The measure of vocational attitude maturity used in the project was Crites' Vocational Development Inventory. (Author/SES)

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT GROUPS:

WHY WE DID IT!

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Career Development Groups:

WHY WE DID IT

The impetus for the development of a group approach to career counseling arose from a need to meet the increasing demand for vocational counseling, as well as from a general discontent with traditional one-to-one individual counseling. It appeared that clients who were requesting vocational decision-making assistance were receiving nothing more than an intake interview during which one or two vocational tests were assigned and a follow-up session was scheduled at which time the test results were interpreted. The emphasis was placed on an extremely directive approach to counseling in which the counselor assumed much of the responsibility in the decision-making process. In an effort to more actively involve the individual in the counseling process, a group experience was designed and implemented. By employing group procedures, it was also possible to reduce the amount of professional time involved while providing a meaningful counseling experience.

Several theoretical formulations were drawn upon in designing the activities for the groups. The major focus of counseling was patterned after the developmental aspect of career decision-making outlined by Morrill

and Forrest (1970). These theorists suggested that the career decision-making process involved a series of tentative choices continually being made by growing and changing people who were constantly engaging in the learning process. Such a model of career development emphasizes the dynamic aspect of the process rather than assuming it to be a static point-in-time event. They further theorized that effective career counseling should stimulate the individual to utilize his own strengths in achieving self-determined goals while simultaneously teaching him how to profit and grow personally from vocational experience.

The adoption of a group format seemed very appropriate to implement this theory. Structured exercises were designed which actively involved the participants in occupational information-seeking behavior. Specific tasks were designed to teach the students how to begin exploring the world-of-work through exposure to campus and community resources. An added advantage of the group setting was that it permitted the group members to share the information obtained by them from their explorations with the other group participants. This aspect of the career development groups generated more data for the members to process, and thus created

increased opportunities for the development of new choices and the discarding of previously held stereotypes.

A second developmental theory of career decision-making (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, & Herma; 1951) was also drawn upon heavily in the formulation of the career development group program. Ginzberg, et al, hypothesized that the vocational choice process occurred over a time period delimited into more or less clearly defined stages. Their basic notion was that as the individual develops vocationally, he makes a series of decisions which are based initially on personal wishes and desires, followed by interest factors, capacities, and values, and culminating with the inclusion of other reality factors. The establishment of a compromise among these different variables being the essence of the entire developmental process.

In order to provide some basis for the group members to evaluate their stage in the developmental process, it appeared advisable to provide them with a conceptualization of the process. Ginzberg's theory was selected for use in the groups because it has generated research partially supporting the existence of the hypothesized stages (O'Hara, 1959; Davis, Hagan,

and Strouf, 1962; O'Hara and Tiedeman, 1959; Crites, 1960) and also because it appeared to be readily understandable to those unfamiliar with the concepts of career development. The theory was described to the group members during the first session so that they would have a basis for assessing where they were in the process of career development. The comparative simplicity of Ginzberg's theory made it possible to adopt it for assessment purposes as well as to facilitate self-exploration. Having the group members conceptualize their stage in the developmental process both at the beginning and end of the group experience also provided the participants an opportunity to assess their progress during the counseling process.

Although initially designed to be a three-session structured group experience with one professional counselor directing it, future development is directed toward less professional involvement. The exercises were constructed so that they could either be written down in manual form or video-taped for visual presentation to groups by a paraprofessional. The major focus of the program, group discussion involving occupational awareness and vocational exploration, would continue to be facilitated by the paraprofessional participating

in the group. By using paraprofessionals as group facilitators, the dynamic aspect of the developmental process can be maintained rather than reducing it to a more rigid individualized experience.

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